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Senator Patti Anne Lodge:

Solution to Gun Violence Isn't What You Think by Tony Perkins: a former police officer

Increasingly, few if any genuinely safe places exist as a refuge from armed, angry, addicted young men pumped up on violent video games and suffering from the absence of a moral core. Schools, churches, shopping centers, businesses, and almost every place people gather have become targets for deranged individuals who are set on perpetrating evil and in possession of lethal weapons. At what point will we have the courage to acknowledge that our nation has a problem?

As a former police officer, this perspective on gun violence is not an academic approach. I've encountered armed suspects and dealt with gun-related violence. I've lost friends, gunned down in the line of duty. I have a full appreciation of the stress that families of law enforcement officers endure each day as their father, mother, son, or daughter head out to protect their neighbors and communities.

As president of the Family Research Council, I also saw gun violence from another perspective – as a target of hate. Our organization in Washington D.C. was attacked by a now convicted, domestic terrorist. Inspired by a leftist organization, Floyd Lee Corkins came into our offices with 100 rounds of ammunition and began firing, critically wounding one of our team members.

Yet the growing frequency and scale of such armed atrocities are symptomatic of a much deeper crisis, fomenting for decades. It is dishonest and self-serving of politicians who claim that this crisis is the result of statements made by President Donald Trump about securing our southern border. How would they explain the mass shootings that took place in Orlando, Sandy Hook, San Bernardino or Aurora during the Obama administration?

While policies may have an impact on this issue, unfortunately the debate never gets beyond the stalemate over "gun control." Though an ardent supporter of the Second Amendment, I am willing to talk about laws regarding the ownership and use of guns by those who should not have them. But the missing component to this discussion playing on an endless political loop is the impact of the moral vacuum created by eliminating values, faith and civility from the public square.

Restricting the implements of violence while ignoring the causes is futile. Our nation's capital, with some of the most restrictive gun-ownership laws in the country, clearly illustrates this point. Washington has a gun murder rate of 18 per 100,000, and the city's gun-control laws did not protect our organization. Nationwide, as many as 80 percent of gun-related crime involves illegal guns.

And do laws blocking gun ownership stop murder? The United Kingdom, which already has strict laws on the ownership of guns, began restricting the sale and possession of knives over three inches long after a rash of episodes of knife violence last year. The focus on tools still misses the greater problem.

A deadly game with life-and-death stakes plays out in all cultures when violent people choose to act against their fellow citizens. Rock, paper, scissors, machete, rope, knife, gun – the instruments chosen are secondary to the reasons people strike out.

As Jesus observed in Matthew 15:19, from the human heart comes murder. To talk about the "why" and not just the "how," requires we go beyond external, environmental factors to focus on the internal aspect of morality. And we can't have an honest discussion about morality without including religion.

Our nation's founders understood the importance of faith and morality working hand in hand in our republic to restrain the worst of our human nature. George Washington in his farewell address at the end of his second term as president included several pieces of advice for preserving America's prosperity, security and happiness.

He observed: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

Washington was not alone in this conviction. John Adams, the second president of the United States, recognized the limitations of our laws. In speaking to the Massachusetts militia, Adams said, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Some will be quick to say that nearly 250 years later, America has moved beyond the faith that inspired nation builders. That is a tragedy. Today our culture increasingly marginalizes public faith and religion, pushing it from the public square. But in the process, we've lost public morality, common decency and virtue, which are essential to freedom.

To achieve security for our families and communities while preserving the freedom that has made America great, we have only one option: Restore morality by renewing our commitment to the free exercise of religion. In other words, we should protect, not prevent, religious freedom.

Our baser nature clearly is not changed by passing more laws. The promises of security through more government restrictions will only serve to erode our freedoms while providing little protection. Rather, the solution to the gun violence plaguing our nation will be found in a willingness to recognize, as did the Founders, that as a people we are dependent upon and accountable to an omniscient God. It is only from such an understanding that morality and public virtue become commonplace, which is essential for freedom.

As Americans, we must carefully consider the path we take in

addressing this present and growing crisis. New gun laws never achieve what a commitment to the Golden Rule can accomplish. America will be safer if all of us do unto others as we want them to do unto us. By Tony Perkins, August 25, 2019.

Probably the most erroneous decision by the Supreme Court was the case of *Everson v. the Board of Education* in 1947. This one decision by Federal Judges has crumbled the very moral foundation of America. We are paying a very steep price for this decision 70 years later.

Paul Stuber